

## **BEDFORD YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES**

**Sue Baldauf**  
**Director**

**Tom Pinney**  
**Advisory Committee Chair**

### **2012 Annual Report**

#### **Purpose**

As a result of our Strategic Planning process three years ago, we continue to live our revised mission and operate with that revised bylaw. The *mission* of Bedford Youth and Family Services (YFS) is to *identify and address the social, emotional, and developmental needs of children, youth, adults, and families in Bedford through programs and services that support and nurture*. The services we provide include:

#### **Supportive Counseling**

- Confidential individual and family counseling related to family life and adjustment issues
- Crisis intervention and assessment
- Assistance with local entitlement programs like veterans benefits and fuel assistance

#### **Community Education**

- Forums and seminars to strengthen parenting skills, improve life adjustment, and encourage healthy lifestyles and family life
- Collaboration with community groups and school and town officials on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and towards best serving the needs of youths and families

#### **Resource and Referral**

- Information about existing resources
- Outreach and referral for appropriate services
- Up to date educational pamphlets, resource guides and materials

#### **Youth Empowerment**

- Positive alternatives for youth through after school; tobacco, alcohol, and substance use education, prevention and diversion programs; and the Job Match Program
- Promotion of the development of a strong and positive youth voice through collaboration with schools, police and other youth serving organizations on the Peer Mentoring Program and a youth website.

Bedford Youth and Family Services envisions a town committed to the well-being and safety of children, youth, and families; a town that promotes community awareness of healthy lifestyles; and a community where these commitments are demonstrated in policies and actions. Our focus will be on prevention, wellness, and a commitment to excellence. We continue to strive to improve the health of the people we serve through individual or family intervention, community education, resource assistance, and youth empowerment and support. The Department works closely with schools, police, community agencies, citizen groups, and the courts.

Youth and Family Services is guided by the following strategic goals:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive system to serve the social, emotional, and developmental needs of the citizens of Bedford.
2. Strive to improve the health of our residents through supportive individual and family counseling, community education, and youth empowerment and support.
3. Collaborate and model partnership in service to our mission with Town departments, schools, community organizations, parents, youth, and citizens at large.
4. Promote inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural competence in mobilizing community resources to best serve the needs of all citizens.
5. Obtain and manage the financial resources necessary to further our mission and accomplish our strategic goals.
6. Advocate for and implement the infrastructure necessary to accomplish our tasks.

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**Employee Statistics**

Number of Employees:

Full-time:	2
Part-time:	2

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**FY2012 Highlights**

The Department successfully met or actively worked on its strategic goals as well as its special projects for the year. We remain active partners with several Town departments, all the schools, parent groups, and citizen groups like the Violence Prevention Coalition, the Bedford Community Partnership, the Regional Early Childhood Advisory Council (formerly Community Partnership for Children), and the Chamber of Commerce. We continue to promote inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural competence in both our individual and programmatic dealings. We manage our resources with frugality and seek outside funding for special projects to offset Town budget expenditure. Our honed mission statement and strategic goals will continue to guide our daily work and future initiatives.

The department receives community oversight by a 9 member citizen advisory committee that meets regularly 5 times a year.

We continue to benefit from our office space centrally located in the renovated Town Center building. Our residents drop in with more frequency and are positively impacted by the bright, cheery surroundings. We continue to be grateful to the Town and its residents for continued support of our work.

**Supportive Counseling**

This year marked the twenty-second successful year collaborating with Eliot Community Human Services in Concord on the provision of counseling services to Bedford residents. Services were provided by five licensed, trained clinicians at our offices at Bedford Town Center building, at other school or community sites, or at the

Eliot offices in the Community Agencies Building next to Emerson Hospital. Just at our Bedford site, counseling services have been provided to approximately 150 different people over the course of the year with over 700 contacts, from a low of 45 to a high of 75 people each month. The five clinical staff have held almost 1300 sessions during the year at our Bedford site, the low being 70 sessions a month and the high being 160. Slightly fewer sessions have been reported in Concord, with about 75 residents choosing that site for services.

The contract owes its success to the commitment of responsiveness established by Bedford and carried out by Eliot as well as the range of services available at Eliot, including psychological testing and medication assessment.

This year marked a successful year providing Veterans Services for Bedford residents. With the marked increase in veterans residing in the community and increased need for services, we have been able to provide high visibility, regular Bedford hours, newspaper coverage, and regular visits to community settings for educational and support purposes. A significant increase has been noted this year in Senior Veterans requesting assistance completing applications for VA Compensation and Health Benefits. We have had over 800 face-to-face contacts on veterans' related issues, fielded about 1,000 phone calls, and participated in several community support sessions at the COA, the VA Hospital in the Grand Opening of the Women Veterans Support Clinic and other community sites, involving about 2500 participants. We participated in a successful fund raising effort at the VA Hospital and assisted in raising over \$9,000 for a VA Wheel Chair Bus for the Patients, Golden Age Games, and other programs. We have been involved with the sixty units of veterans housing developed and occupied at the Bedford Veterans Hospital and had the majority of new clients from that site. We participate regularly in the Patriotic Holidays Committee and Veterans Day and Memorial Day remembrances and have attended 12 Funerals or Memorial Services for Veterans this past year.

The Prevention Coordinator also continued responsibility aiding residents with the Fuel Assistance application process, completing 11 of the 22 total new applications and 2 re-certifications as well as assisting residents with applications for housing, Food Stamps, or other forms of aid. This included fielding countless phone calls, as well as the regular maintenance of the Youth and Family Services and Teen websites on the Town homepage.

### **Community Education**

We continue our eighteenth year of school and town collaboration on Prevention Services. Our full time Prevention Services Coordinator has responsibility for not only the prevention work but also the After School, Peer Mentoring, and the Youth Website. The Safe Homes Program designed to support parental limit setting at teen parties entered its ninth year with a stable enrollment of about 251 families. This year marked the thirteenth annual town-wide Substance Abuse Awareness Month with prevention focused newspaper articles and bulletin board displays at both the middle and high schools related to topics like stress, friendship, transitions, safe driving, and alcohol use. We facilitated administration of the seventh Youth Risk Behavior Survey done April 2012 in collaboration with the Bedford Public Schools and Social Science Research and Evaluation (SSRE). We continued our regular prevention programming at all schools and successful offering of tobacco, drug and alcohol education and diversion programs with both the Police Department and the school system. We continued the sixth year of

our Volunteer Opportunities Book with listings from Bedford organizations and made available to Bedford youth and other residents looking for community service possibilities.

Our parent education series was successful with 8 different offerings this year, again featuring local and less costly presenters as well as a four part series on underage drinking and drug use prevention. We reached about 425 parents and professionals and collaborated with the schools and local parent organizations.

We collaborated with the Bedford Police on alcohol and drug diversion, domestic violence response, and a school resource officer grant. We continue to work with School and Town representatives to further develop crisis response capability in sync with the Town's emergency procedures. We maintain contact with our core group of community professionals available on the mental health crisis team known as Community Crisis Response Team and who would be activated through our office at a time of need. We met monthly with the school crisis team.

On behalf of the Selectmen, we did successfully continue the collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and the Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford to educate about Diversity Training for Bedford businesses. In lieu of scheduling large group training, we continued to work with the Chamber of Commerce to add materials related to diversity and cultural competence to the Chamber website. We plan to continue to offer small group training by request. Total Bedford businesses trained to date remains at forty-four.

Regionally we continue to be active in the Northwest Suburban Health Alliance, or CHNA 15, the 12-town public health region that serves Bedford. We continue to sit on the Young Adult Initiative Board of the Metro South West Regional Employment Board and participated in their grant review process this year to provide youth job training programs. Statewide we are active with Local Officials Human Services Council, or LOHSC, the human services arm of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and served as President again this year. In that capacity we worked with the MMA to coordinate two regional trainings, one with the Massachusetts Councils on Aging on Municipal Human Services Delivery and another with Northborough Council on Aging on Emergency Preparedness, and one workshop at the MMA Annual Meeting in January. We frequently write and coordinate submission of the publicity articles for LOHSC for the MMA monthly newsletter. We served on the Massachusetts' Executive Office of Health and Human Services Children Youth and Families Advisory Committee to improve efficiency in state services to those populations, submitting a report to the Governor mid-year, and will likely be continuing on a task force looking at the development of Family Access Centers. We serve on the Regional Early Childhood Advisory Council which provided childcare assistance for working families of pre-school children. We also serve on the Gould Farm Boston Advisory Committee in consultative capacity for their community based psychiatric rehabilitation program about Boston area resources such as mental health services, housing, and vocational programs. We also review grants for the Administration for Children and Families of the Health and Human Services Regional Office in Boston for their federal grants program as time allows.

## **Resource and Referral**

Our office has had approximately 10,000 resident contacts this year in several of our services and youth events. We documented 2000 specific contacts with

over 500 residents and have fielded about 1300 calls, 350 emails, and 350 generic visits to the office. We distributed about 120 new resident packets.

We continued to work with the Town Manager to secure additional community efforts towards Bedford's continued efforts to fight hate and bigotry in collaboration with the Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford (VPC). We also worked with VPC representatives, the Selectmen, and Recreation on honing the code of conduct for field use for sports activities and developing a reporting mechanism.

## **Youth Empowerment**

Our Prevention Coordinator continued collaboration with the Middle School on a successful after school program. We again offered fall, winter and spring programs for a total of 80 registrations. We were fortunate to have a total of 3 Middle School teachers/staff, 1 High School teacher and 2 community instructors offer a total of 8 classes and activities. The Peer Mentoring program was quite successful this year as an After School option as part of the activities offered in the Corner, the youth space in Town Center overseen by the Recreation Department.

Other projects the Prevention Coordinator worked on include an After School Video Production Club jointly run with Bedford TV and participation in the Bedford Youth Task Force and the Bedford Public Schools Wellness Council.

Job Match continues to be an important resource for residents and a rewarding learning experience for teens. Many students who would otherwise have not been able to find work have found employment through Job Match. We have had over 136 contacts related to that service with about 70 matches. The number of students throughout the year signed up to work averaged 60. Many satisfied residents have participated in this service for years.

Working under the auspices of the Bedford Community Partnership (BCP) and its Youth Task Force, we continued the work with the Schools, Police, Recreation, and Health on our local policy on youth. We were honored to have received our fourth award as one of America's **100 Best Communities for Young People**, this year with a monetary award which we used to support staffing and food for Friday evening activities at the Corner. For the eighth year in a row, we coordinated the "Bedford Families Unplugged" event in November. This involved a calendar for the month and one night designated as no homework, no sports events, no night meetings evening and encouraging families to 'unplug' and spend time together in face-to-face interaction.

We were honored to receive a \$6000 grant from the Northwest Suburban Health Alliance/CHNA 15 DoN funds from Lahey Clinic for a Bedford in Motion project this year. This grant supports a website developed to foster healthy lifestyles and health and wellness resources for families to address high Body Mass Index (BMI) rates, especially in children. This website also incorporates the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) initiative begun two years ago in initial collaboration with Health, Lane School, Police, and Bicycle Advisory Committee and which involves designated days for students to walk or bike to school as well as on site bicycle and pedestrian safety training at the 2 elementary schools. Davis and John Glenn Middle School have both now signed on to the program and participated in events this past year. Towards the latter quarter of the fiscal year we were awarded a \$15,000 Healthy Communities Planning Grant again from CHNA 15,

which will run 18 months and afford Bedford the opportunity to ensure healthy community principles are guiding planning efforts and project implementation ideas.

We collaborated with the Bedford Chamber of Commerce on the first RAY (Recognize A Youth) Award, which was established to identify a high school age young person who performs outstanding service to the Bedford community and/or who by their actions are excellent role models for their peers. The first award was given at the Chamber's Annual Dinner in April.

Youth Task Force also worked with a group of middle school age youth on organizing a dance event for that age group and which was offered at Bedford High School. That event drew about 150 youth.

### **FY 2013 Projects**

We are continuing our efforts to maintain our accessibility to the community at large. We plan to continue to ensure public awareness about our services through our seasonal newsletter, up-to-date website, regular press releases, and new resident packets. We plan to continue to be on the lookout for new ways to better educate youth and parents about tobacco, alcohol, and substance use and abuse. We will continue to support the Selectmen, Recreation, and the community in their response to maintaining adequate youth space, following up on the success of the Corner again this year for middle school youth. In addition to continuing our ongoing projects like disseminating the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, sponsoring the Safe Homes Program and the Peer Mentor Program, and coordinating Business Diversity Training, we are planning the following special tasks for next year:

1. Distribute the eighth edition of the Community Social Services Reference Guide.
  2. Enhance parent education offerings for the community based on ongoing success of collaborations with other Bedford parent groups and interested parties.
  3. Coordinate the ninth Bedford Families Unplugged event November 2012 in conjunction with Bedford Community Partnership, Selectmen, Schools, parent associations, and Bedford Historical Society.
  4. Plan and coordinate with Violence Prevention Coalition and other community groups events and activities ensuring Bedford as a community free of hate and bigotry.
  5. Provide administrative oversight and support of Healthy Communities' Planning grant including initiatives like Safe Routes to School and Bedford in Motion in conjunction with Board of Health and on behalf of the Youth Task Force.
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